

great odds. The victory of the University of Illinois Men's Tennis Team at the ITA Championship is a terrific example of these attributes and I would like to extend to them my most sincere congratulations.

HONORING ALL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS KILLED IN LINE OF DUTY

HON. HOWARD P. "BUCK" McKEON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity during National Police Week to honor all those courageous men and women serving as law enforcement officers who have been killed in the line of duty. I appreciate their courage as well as the bravery of their families and loved ones, and hope that they know that they have our sympathies and are in our prayers.

In particular today, I want to pay my respects to David March, a Los Angeles County Deputy Sheriff, killed in the line of duty.

Last year, during a seemingly routine traffic stop, Deputy March, a 33 year-old husband and stepfather, was shot and killed. His suspected killer is an illegal immigrant who fled to Mexico to escape facing the bar of justice.

Mexican officials have refused to extradite his assailant, Garcia because he could face the death penalty or life in prison without possibility of parole. This is because the Mexican government usually refuses to extradite Mexican nationals who commit crimes in the United States and flee to Mexico, unless there are assurances that the death penalty and life imprisonment will not be sought.

We cannot allow such criminals to make a mockery of our justice system. In response to this barbaric act, I have introduced House Concurrent Resolution 93 to encourage President George W. Bush to work with the Mexican government to renegotiate our extradition treaty with Mexico so that other prospective killers may be thwarted and those cowardly hiding across the border may be brought to justice.

Family and friends will long remember the integrity of Deputy David March and together we will work to bring about this needed change in policy. As we engage in the endeavor, we will keep in the forefront of our minds the integrity and goodness of David March.

JOHN STEKETEE, PIONEER IN YOUTH LAW

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to regrettably announce the passing of a great jurist whose pioneering efforts in the field of juvenile law have changed much of the way we think about this complex and often controversial area of jurisprudence.

John Steketee was a third generation lawyer who spent over 30 years on the bench, mostly

as presiding/chief judge of the Kent County Michigan Probate Court, Juvenile Division. I came to know Judge Steketee when he was the leader of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and I was doing the research that would culminate in enactment of the P.L. 96-272, the national foster care and adoption reform law of 1980. Judge Steketee was one of the earliest jurists to focus on the importance of permanency planning for children who had entered into, and often became trapped within, the bureaucratic maze of the foster care system.

I frankly don't remember if I found him or he found me, but however it occurred, he played a hugely important role in shaping that legislation. Because of Judge Steketee's involvement, we were able to craft legislation that included case planning, periodic reviews of placement, and requirements for appropriateness of placements. He genuinely believed that the system had to be accountable to the child. The record of his achievements on the bench in Michigan, and his friendship with then-President Gerald Ford, helped many of those who might otherwise have been indifferent to recognize the workability and importance of the reforms we were proposing.

The first Children in Placement study was conducted in his court in 1971, which enabled him to discover lost children in the system and make sure that plans were being made for them. Through his association with them he was instrumental in successfully encouraging judges across the country to see permanency as an important issue for children and families, and that it was a duty for judges to hold all accountable for permanency to be achieved for all children. Judge Steketee was the first chair of the National Council's Permanency Planning Committee, and was the President of the Council 1984-1985. After retirement he continued to remain a strong advocate for permanency for the nation's children, and advocated for therapeutic juvenile and family drug courts.

I would like to extend my condolences and those of the House to his widow, Maribeth, his daughters Betsy Fenner and Martha Steketee, his three step-daughters, Erin Checchi, Leigh Baker, and Laurie Baker, and his seven grandchildren.

This is a man who made a great contribution to our nation and especially to its children and families, and I know the House joins me in paying respects to his memory. I would also like to include an article from the Grand Rapids Press on Judge Steketee.

[From the Grand Rapids Press, May 3, 2003]

JUDGE JOHN STEKETEE, A FORCE FOR CHILDREN, DIES AT 76
(By Doug Guthrie)

A voice for children in need was still Friday with the death of retired Kent County Probate Judge John Steketee.

Steketee, 76, died from heart failure at Spectrum Health Blodgett. He battled cancer since before his retirement in 2000, following 33 years on the bench.

"This is one of those people who may have been better known in the nation than you thought you knew him at home," said David Mitchell, executive director of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

With enthusiasm for openness and change, Steketee was a pioneer in efforts to move foster children more quickly into permanent homes. His reshaping of the juvenile welfare system in Kent County brought national attention.

Mitchell said word of Steketee's death triggered a stream of e-mails at his University of Nevada office in Reno.

"Without his example, leadership and vision, we would not have moved the judicial system to the rules and permanence for children that we have achieved," wrote Judge Richard Fitzgerald of Louisville, Ky. . . . His mentorship of all of us has helped us in building a just system."

Said Mitchell, who served 18 years as a judge in Baltimore: "He was a great man and mentor to so many of us. He taught men and women throughout this nation how to be judges and child advocates. He was loved."

His closest friends and family were at a loss Friday to explain what in Steketee's life gave him the strength to walk alone so many years ago against the current of conventional bureaucratic wisdom.

"I'm not sure what it was," said his son, John Steketee. "He loved his work and had a desire to help."

Press columnist Arn Shackleford for 35 years has written weekly stories about local children in need of adoptive parents. She said it was Steketee who encouraged her to start.

"The first quote I ever used from him was, 'You can't replace parental neglect with governmental neglect.' He was just a truly good person who loved kids," Shackleford said.

Raised on Grand Rapids' Southeast Side, Steketee became the third generation of his family to practice law. After earning degrees from the University of Michigan and Wayne State University, he joined the family firm in 1956. He carried on another family tradition, serving as the Netherlands' vice-consul for Michigan.

Steketee was elected to Kent County's Probate Court in 1967, handling estates, juvenile issues, and mental health commitments. The part of the job he liked best was obvious, as the man with the snow-white beard became known as the "Santa Claus Judge."

His office in the Waalkes Juvenile Center on Cedar Street NE became decorated over the years with hundreds of snapshots taken at adoption ceremonies, where Steketee had everyone in every adopted family swear under oath to love one another.

Off the job, he loved to sail. He owned two sailboats in his lifetime, the Shields and Twin Wing, berthed in Holland. He never raced, only cruised and relaxed on the waves.

Despite already being diagnosed with lung cancer, it was state law that prohibited Steketee from seeking another six years in office because of his age.

Even undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatments, Steketee remained active in his retirement.

Mitchell said he spoke with Steketee last week about plans to attend the council's annual national convention in July in San Antonio.

Until recently, Steketee also served as a visiting judge, filling in for others on the Kent County Circuit bench. He often stopped by the Kent County Courthouse to lobby for a new idea, visit his old staff or simply find a lunch partner.

"He was fighting the cancer and trying to live his life," his wife, Maribeth, said Friday.

Judge Patrick Hillary, who was elected to Steketee's seat, said Friday was a busy day in court, but one with many pauses to reflect. Hillary used to practice as domestic relations attorney in front of Steketee, and when elected, inherited his staff and caseload.

"People say, 'You replaced Judge Steketee.' I'm always real careful to say, 'I succeeded Judge Steketee,'" Hillary said. "Nobody could replace him."